

## **Tempe Budget Employee Forum**

Feb. 16, 2010, at 7 a.m.

Field Services Assembly Hall

The following is a recap of questions asked and answers given during the third of four employee forums held in February 2010 regarding the 2010-11 city budget balancing effort. Answers were provided by a mixture of staff members including City Manager Charlie Meyer and Human Resources Manager Renie Broderick.

### **Q1: Will layoffs be done citywide or just department-wide?**

**A:** Layoff will be done at the department level. However, the bumping process does cross departments, making it citywide.

### **Q2: Approximately how many people will be laid off?**

**A:** It depends on how much money is restored by Council with proposals like the sales tax. As of now, 253 full-time positions are identified for elimination; 215 of those positions are currently occupied. There are more revenue options that could be considered to solve the problem. If the proposed sales tax passes, it is possible that half of those positions could be restored.

### **Q3: How many administrative positions versus frontline positions will be eliminated?**

**A:** There are 28 proposed manager positions up for elimination through the consolidation plan. The percentage of affected managers was a little higher than frontline employees in the 2010-11 proposal.

### **Q4. Can all positions be bumped? What if someone has special training? Are any positions exempt?**

**A:** Some positions are not eligible for bumping – they are usually management positions. All others are eligible to bump. Some specialized jobs make it difficult for the employee to be bumped into another position somewhere else in the city.

### **Q5: Some employees took a voluntary demotion last year. Could these employees bump back up to the higher position they once held?**

**A:** Yes, you can bump up if you previously held that position.

### **Q6: Has anyone calculated what the overall benefit of a work furlough day would be?**

**A:** Yes, the General Fund impact would be about \$375,000 savings per furlough day. If we held 10 days of furlough the savings would be \$3.75 million. To hit the \$5 million goal, the city would need 13 days of furlough per employee.

### **Q7. Are vacation hours affected by furloughs?**

**A.** Yes, furloughs do affect vacation hours and work schedules. We may experience people deciding to hold back on using vacation because they are being furloughed for

several days, forcing the city to pay out the excess vacation at the end of the year for those employees who are over the limit. For these reasons, furloughs would be recommended as a temporary measure for one year only.

**Q8: Are furloughs based on work days or on hours per work day?**

**A:** Furloughs will be based on the number of hours you work per day. For example, if you work 10 hours a day then you would be furloughed for 10 hours. Fire Department personnel are an exception.

**Q9: Would furloughs be served across the board?**

**A:** Yes, they would be served across the board with no exemptions unless an employee previously took a cut, then that employee will not be hit twice by facing a furlough. *(Postscript: this issue is still under review.)*

**Q10: Can the Police Department be furloughed even though they have a rule in place that states they must work 40 hours a week to receive retirement benefits?**

**A:** Yes, it is the formal opinion of our City Attorney's Office that furloughs would be allowed under this rule. The rule is meant to exclude part-time employees from getting benefits.

**Q11: Is it possible to job share?**

**A:** It is possible for two people to share a job, the system allows for it. However, it requires both people are aware of the effects and can work out schedules and other potential issues. If two people wanted to job share, we would take a long hard look at it.

**Q12: For furloughs to be implemented does it require opening the MOU?**

**A:** Furloughs can be implemented without the opening of MOUs. If your employee group wants to open the MOU and work out another option besides furloughs they can.

**Q13: If the MOU opens and SEIU decides to reduce salary or pursue other reductions would the saved money stay in the SEIU group?**

**A:** Yes, it is the intent that the money saved would stay within the SEIU group.

**Q14: What does a 1 percent pay cut mean to the General Fund?**

**A:** A 1 percent pay cut means \$1.2 million to the General Fund.

**Q15: How was the target budget savings for each department calculated?**

**A:** An overall citywide deficit of about \$30 million was known. A committee then formulated six criteria to determine budget targets for each department. This is half of how the targets were decided. Then the City Manager then took into account the importance of public safety and reworked it to create less of a hit to those vital services.

**Q16: Will temporary employees be eliminated before full-time employees?**

**A:** While there may be some exceptions, generally temporary employees will be eliminated prior to full-time employees.

**Q17: When it comes to bumping, if there is a one and a two in a flex class can the twos bump the ones?**

**A:** Bumping is based on seniority within the city, not within a single position.

**Q18: If you hold an at-will position and have been with the city for many years, will you no longer have the right to bump?**

**A:** Yes, if you go to an at-will position you will no longer have the right to bump even if you held a classified position before.

**Q19: If you are laid off how long will the city maintain its reduced workforce?**

**A:** It will be a long period of time. Unfortunately, for the next five years we are not expecting to reinstate many of the eliminated positions.

**Q20: When you bump back into a previously held position who will be laid off?**

**A:** In a general classification, it will be the least senior member that will be laid off. You have to have more seniority than the person you bump.

**Q21: Would you be allowed to bump into a lower position in the job family if you've never held that position.**

**A:** Yes.

**Q22: Does time as a temporary employee count towards seniority?**

**A:** No, time as a temporary employee does not count. Time spent in a part-time position does count toward tenure, however. Check the online seniority list done by HR to check and ensure that your start date is listed correctly.

**Q23: Would a person bumping be able to choose where they end up working?**

**A:** No, if you are working in one department you will move to a department that is losing a position. However, once the dust settles there may be an opportunity to work with the departments to place people in other departments if possible.

**Q24: Is the city looking at extending the two year layoff list?**

**A:** It is something the city is looking into. However, it is sometimes difficult for these lists to be successful because of difficulty in tracking people down after long periods of time. In order to make this work, we will need to create a system to keep track of people.

**Q25: Has the city considered reducing the work week to 30 hours per week versus the 40-hour work week we have now?**

**A:** Yes, but it is difficult for this route to be successful. If we make this option voluntary, we would not be able to accurately count the savings in case people decide that they need to return to a 40 hour work week. There may be ability to do this in an entire work area if everyone could agree.

**Q26: When it comes to the admin positions citywide, you could have someone from Public Works going to the Police Department, for example, and it might not be a good fit. Will there be a way to move around once it's done?**

**A:** When everything settles, we can look into whether we can swap positions to find better fits.

**Q27: If an employee bumps into a new position would they be placed on probation?**

**A:** No. Employees have their initial probation period when they take their initial job with the city. For an employee who bumps into a new position, it would be a good idea to establish an evaluation process to see if they have a good fit in the position.

**Q28: Do we have a plan for informing the public about reductions in service and expectations for response times?**

**A:** Yes, once we know the very specific implications of reductions we are planning to inform the public. That will probably start in May or June.

**Q29: Has the city calculated the costs to lay people off?**

**A:** The city is in the process of calculating the amount paid to employees who will be laid off. The city's share of unemployment benefits is difficult to predict because it depends on how long employees are out of work. We are working on the amount of sick and vacation time we would need to pay out and we are figuring out where we will get the money for that.

**Q30: Does the city have any fleet reductions included in the citywide plan?**

**A:** Yes, there would be a \$200,000 reduction for 150 vehicles.

**Q31: My position is being eliminated. I might get bumped and have to go somewhere further from home and do a job I don't want to do. Can I use my higher seniority to choose my hours and work assignments?**

**A:** There is discussion with SEIU about how seniority is currently used to decide shifts and work assignments. We should use the same practice now as what is going on currently.

**Q32: When will all of this be resolved?**

**A:** Council will make decisions on their priorities on March 4. Council will need to make a decision on that day so that staff can build the 2010-11 budget. Shortly after that, HR will start to notify people of position eliminations. We are assuming the bed tax will pass March 9 but the sales tax decision on May 18 is less clear. The sales tax has \$8 million in reinstatements tied to it.

**Q33: What do we get in state-shared revenues. Do we have a contingency if the 1 percent state sales tax does not pass? Will the state then impact our revenues?**

**A:** We get about \$35 million in state-shared revenues. The City Council decided to increase the size of the deficit to \$33.7 million as a hedge against worse economic news or other impacts to our budget down the road.